

store order or protect foreign citizens. The Iraqi claim to be uniting a divided country was both late and lame. So this aggression is in many ways in a class by itself, with very few parallels in recent history, although some would argue that the annexations of Tibet and East Timor fall into the same general category.

But, even if it were not, to say that because the world has not applied similar standards of international order in the past, this should not be made a test case, is surely to preclude ever making progress. The ending of the Cold War terminated the situation where the international community and the UN were polarized and paralyzed, and it created a new opportunity and a new responsibility. There will be another test before very long and probably it will come in some region that is not of as much economic or strategic interest to major world powers. If, at that stage, this new international consensus and the new international security structure fails to respond with equal vigour and even-handedness, the cynics will have been vindicated, and more importantly, the world will be plunged backward.

A third argument against the response to Iraq being taken as a test of international order is grounded in the assertion that this is a unilateral, not a multilateral response – that, in fact, it is the US and not the UN which has taken the action. One can certainly regret that this test came too early after the Cold War thaw for a new mechanism to have been properly organized, but history demonstrates that often it is only the pressure of crises which pushes things ahead. Because this crisis came so early, the United States was the only power which was ready, willing and able to step in rapidly and forcefully to ensure that there would not be further aggression and to demonstrate that the international community would stand firm against military aggression. The past history of unilateral American interventions has been used by many critics to attack this one, without acknowledging the striking differences in the multilateral interests at stake and in the multilateral approach taken by Washington.

### **The UN's Mandate and Procedures**

In a related point, there has been concern and confusion over the UN mandate and procedures under which the international response has proceeded, with assertions that this response is out of line with the letter or spirit of the world organization's mandate. Here, the critics need only read the Charter to realize that in this case, it has been followed further and more faithfully than ever before in relation to the peace and